

The NCO Corps — Producing Premier Leaders

by Command Sergeant Major George DeSario Jr., Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Armor Center

First, I would like to say what a great honor it is to be selected as the U.S. Army Armor Center and Fort Knox Command Sergeant Major. I would like to thank the soldiers, peers, and supervisors who trained, developed, and guided me in all my endeavors.

I have the listening post/observation post, binos, compass, map, weapons, and radio in hand ready to accomplish my mission. I look forward to working with all of our great Armor and Cavalry troopers and leaders. I will continue to make the Armor and Cavalry Force proud of its history.

I have no earth-shattering advice, but I would like to share some time-proven wisdom passed on to me by my senior non-commissioned officers — the two basic responsibilities of an NCO — accomplish the mission and ensure the welfare of your soldiers.

As NCOs, we must produce well-trained, maintained, fit, and motivated troopers and crews. To accomplish this, we must have uncompromising discipline and integrity — discipline and tough training equal unit pride.

In all aspects of our profession, we have published standards to assist the NCO to achieve a GO in any situation. This is where iron discipline comes into play. Anytime an accident happens, we can trace it back to a published standard that was not enforced. This is what we, the NCOs, must instill in ourselves and in subordinates — iron discipline to maintain the published standard. Our most critical task is to follow up and check our subordinates in accomplishing the mission — never give a mission without checking the progress or end result.

The master sergeant selection results for fiscal year 03 are out and the crew from Office, Chief of Armor has completed a board analysis. Bottom line, our career management field (CMF) 19 is healthy.

A total of 92 sergeants first class were selected for promotion to master sergeant; 68 from the primary zone and 24 from the secondary zone. The previous

selection rate was an 80/20-percent split between the primary and secondary zones. This year the Department of the Army removed this predetermined rate, and the board selected the best in each zone for a 74/26-percent split and the secondary zone was expanded to 18 months. Expanding the secondary zone increases the number of soldiers considered and lowers the Armywide selection rate. Of the 92 selected, 58 were military occupational specialty (MOS) 19K40 and 34 were MOS 19D; this matches the force's authorization percentage.

In accordance with the Armor propensity guidance booklet and Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-25, *U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*, the panel established a minimum standard for credible time served in key leadership positions, for example, platoon sergeant is 18 months. The panel looked favorably at NCOs who had more than 18 months, and gave a positive discriminator to those who had first sergeant time.

The key to getting promoted to master sergeant is serving a minimum of 18 months successfully as a platoon sergeant. There appears to be sufficient opportunity to serve a minimum of 18 months in platoon sergeant positions, in accordance with the proponent guidance. Serving as a platoon sergeant for more than 24 months is both preferable and attainable. Sergeants first class completing TDA, master gunner, staff, or AC/RC assignments should not look for another position of this type until they complete their platoon sergeant time in an MTOE unit. If moved from the key platoon sergeant position, the NCO should move into a career-enhancing position, such as senior drill sergeant, noncommissioned officer education system small-group instructor, or observer controller at one of the Army's training centers. Back-to-back TDA assignments and long periods of TDA time were negative discriminators.

Records on training, civilian education, and military schooling show most CMF 19s have college credit. Every NCO should pursue education to at least the associate degree level; college education

demonstrates soldier initiative and the desire for self-development. Military courses, such as master gunner, scout leaders course, and Ranger School, help develop the soldier in to a well-rounded and well-trained NCO, which is an extreme benefit to the unit.

When evaluating an NCO using the Non-commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER), the rater must be specific when addressing the rated NCO, especially if the NCO is filling a master sergeant or first sergeant position. The rater must include how long the NCO has been in the position. A precautionary note, bullet comments addressing NCO education system performance, such as making the commandant's list or graduating in the top 20 percent, must match the NCO's academic evaluation report. Board members are comparing. Annotate the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) scores on the NCOER, especially if the NCO is awarded the APFT badge.

Senior raters need to address three areas: potential, overall performance, and future schooling/assignments. Your first bullet should address the NCO's potential in areas such as promotions and schooling. Be clear and to the point: promote now, promote ahead of peers, promote, or do not promote. Absence of a promotion recommendation sends a negative message. The board should see consistency in the NCO's past performance and potential records. You should place your strongest bullet comments first.

As senior leaders, we should encourage our NCOs to aggressively pursue increased participation in NCO recognition programs such as Sergeant Morales, Sergeant Audie Murphy, NCO of the Year, Instructor of the Year, and Drill Sergeant of the Year. The demonstrated performance of excellence and membership is considered for the very best and makes a positive impact throughout the long-term career of an NCO.

In closing, I would like to thank Command Sergeant Major Gainey for leaving such a fine outfit. To Major General Tucker for trusting me to be his wingman: Sir, thanks for the chance to excel under your command.